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# Nixon's sense of humor and 'candor' bid

WASHINGTON — Bebe Rebozo talking to Walter Cronkite about his friend, Richard Nixon:

"He's got a great sense of humor and a very unique sense of humor that people don't see. . . . but it's so quick coming. . . . And if you try to repeat it, it doesn't have the zing that it has with him. . . . We had one time. . . . Somebody gave me a couple of these ladies' legs. It looks like a real leg. They're skin-colored and all, and they're blown up. And so [Robert] Abplanalp was going to come over to visit us, so we decided to play a trick on him. . . . We borrowed a wig . . . put it into bed with . . . the legs sticking out from under the sheet.

And I hid while the President was to show Abplanalp thru the house. Well, Bob came in, and when he saw that, he didn't — he didn't know whether to act like he didn't see it or what. . . . It was quite a riot. . . . I was hiding around the corner with a flash camera and took a picture of Abplanalp hovering over this figure in bed. . . . It's hard to recall the incidents, but he really has a rare and quick sense of humor."

THE ABOVE was aired on Dec. 21 and it may be the only moment of honesty in this just-concluded period that some other White House wit has named Operation Candor. Refreshing as is this cameo of a giggly President entertaining his millionaire friends, the manner in which Operation Candor's last two documents concerning the milk and I. T. T. cases were released may tell us more about what the man is up to.

The Nixon explanation of his part in these two curdled affairs had been promised since last November. Nevertheless, he or Ron Ziegler released these two controversial documents 35 minutes before the major nightly TV news programs were to go on the air. There was no way the reporters and researchers working on the story could cross-check his assertions with the statements and testimony of the many other people involved in the cases.

All three networks alluded to the lateness of the hour of release without suggesting that it was one of the oldest gimmicks in the public relations business to get a one-sided, biased story on the air. Old and recognizable tho it was, the trick worked. NBC's Tom Brokaw, broadcasting from the network's Burbank studios, had to come on the air live after having had the text read to him on the phone. CBS' Fred Graham was able to look over the material in a taxi cab before rushing in front of a camera.

From what we know about Nixon, he's something of a media buff. He seems to have made as much of a study of our business as of football. He knows how news organizations operate, he knows the rules they've made for themselves, and he knows how their competitiveness can be used to spoil the quality of their work.

Thus he could pull this number certain that his version of the story would air and that nobody would say something like, "The President released his long-waited white papers on I. T. T. and the milk campaign fund too late for us to tell you more than he says he's innocent. We will have a detailed story for you tomorrow."

The next night, while ABC omitted any mention of the story and left their viewers with a slanted, Nixonized version, its two competitors broke with tradition to come back without a "hard news peg" and do a tough analysis.

NBC's Carl Stern and Fred Briggs had pieces suggesting perjury and bribery. But, CBS was rougher. Phil Jones pointed out that Nixon's statement on the milk fund directly contradicted his Oct. 26 statement that "I have a rule. I have refused to accept contributions myself; I have refused any discussion of contributions."

Fred Graham went further, suggesting that the I. T. T. document failed to explain "why two years ago President Nixon permitted the Senate to confirm [Richard] Kleindienst as attorney general on the basis of testimony that may well have been perjured."

This is good journalism, providing, as it did, necessary background information which is usually only available in

*Tomorrow*

- President Nixon hits a record low in the Harris Survey, with a plurality now believing he should resign.
- Nick Thimmesch weighs the odds of a taxpayers' revolt in '74.

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